

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD)

CSRD in the Field: Final Update



**U.S. Department of Education
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Background

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program is designed to provide financial incentives for schools to implement comprehensive reform programs that are based on reliable research and effective practices, and include an emphasis on academics and parental involvement.

CSRD builds upon much of what we know about how children learn and how organizations change. Research on effective schools points to the importance of rigorous curriculum and high standards for all students, an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect among school staff, effective leadership, ongoing and high-quality staff development, efficient school management, and sustained parental involvement.

Research also shows that piecemeal, fragmented approaches to school reform often fail to add up to a coherent whole or raise student achievement. Thus, comprehensive school improvement strategies aim to help transform schools and raise student achievement through consistent, coordinated efforts.

CSRD schools use program funds to adopt or develop research-based comprehensive school reform approaches that employ innovative strategies and proven methods. CSRD schools develop and implement schoolwide reform plans that coordinate resources for effective schooling and align instruction, assessment, classroom management, and professional development, to enable all students to meet challenging state standards. In addition, all CSRD sites receive technical support from an external partner with expertise in schoolwide reform.

Purposes of CSRD in the Field

In the fall of 1998, the U.S. Department of Education began piloting an initiative to gain early information on the new CSRD program. By conducting visits to schools and districts in the first stages of implementing school reforms, the “CSRD in the Field” initiative addresses several purposes:

- *Sharing information.* This initiative offers an opportunity to learn about early program implementation and share successes and challenges. Each state has its own timeline for implementing CSRD. Because the CSRD program is being implemented in stages across the states—some states made grants to districts in time for the beginning of the 1998-99 school year, while many made grants in 1999—states, districts, and schools implementing CSRD early can help later grantees anticipate challenges and avoid problems.
- *Helping the Department become a better partner.* “CSRD in the Field” provides an opportunity for the Department to offer early technical assistance to schools and districts, particularly in the use of federal education funds to support comprehensive reform efforts, and help districts and schools become aware of available resources. This initiative is also helping the Department learn how it can become a better partner in providing guidance and

assistance to schools. The Department has already drawn upon findings from the “CSRD in the Field” visits to determine critical issues to be addressed in upcoming publications and during the U.S. Department of Education’s Regional Conferences on Improving America’s Schools.

- *Guiding policy decisions.* Early information on CSRD implementation is helping to guide Department policy making. Often the Department gets only limited information on implementation during the early stages of a new program. The Department believes that these field visits can help inform decisions about adjusting policy and providing additional support to enhance the chances for program success.
- *Informing reauthorization.* As the Department works with Congress to move forward on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), “CSRD in the Field” is providing helpful information about how federal programs are implemented and how the ESEA can be improved to best support comprehensive school reform efforts.

The Department assembled a team, drawn from several offices across the Department, to conduct the “CSRD in the Field” visits. The group developed a common protocol for the visits and two-member teams spent two days in each district interviewing district staff, school principals, and teachers responsible for implementing CSRD. Department staff responded to requests for technical assistance received during the field visits.

Site visits were conducted in three cohorts: the first taking place in Fall 1998, the second in Spring 1999, and the third in late Fall 1999. In each instance states assisted in selecting the sites to be visited and in making arrangements for the visits. In total, teams visited 35 schools in 26 local districts in 10 different states. Teams revisited a few schools a second time to observe how the reform efforts had progressed. Sites were intentionally selected to represent an array of models and include all grade spans. The schools visited were implementing a variety of models, most of which are externally developed and nationally available, but also included some models locally designed by the districts or schools.

It is important to stress that a majority of the CSRD site visits took place when schools were in the early stages of implementing comprehensive school reform. This report, therefore, sets out some initial impressions about the first steps in the process of implementing CSRD in a small set of schools. The Department is very appreciative of all participants for their willingness to assist in this initiative and welcome us into their schools. The Department has found these visits to be extremely valuable to understanding this program, and hopes to share some of the observations in ways that can help states, districts, schools, and technical assistance providers as more schools take on the opportunity and challenge of comprehensive school reform.

This is the final installment of our “CSRD in the Field” report on initial implementation. The report is designed to be iterative, building on what we learn through new examples and updating our impressions as we add observations. We include here most of the same general observations from earlier versions, along with some additional examples of how schools and districts are dealing with addressing key challenges.

Observations cover topics such as:

Developing School Reform Programs

- Using data to develop and continuously improve school reform programs (see page 4)
- Providing adequate time for districts and schools to assess their needs and investigate programs (see page 5)
- Appropriate use of available resources in choosing models (see page 6)
- Meeting the needs of all students, including special education and English language learners (see page 7)

Implementing School Reform Programs

- Assessing the alignment between school reform models/programs and state and district standards, assessments and school improvement (see page 8)
- Integrating models more fully into comprehensive school reform plans (see page 9)
- Combining two or more models in a coherent manner (see page 10)
- Planning the implementation of proposed reform efforts (e.g., staffing and use of time) (see page 11)

Support for Reform Efforts

- The role of the district in supporting school reform efforts (see page 12)
- Shared understandings regarding the type and intensity of services to be provided by external partners or providers (see page 13)
- The additional technical assistance needs of schools developing their own reform efforts (see page 14)
- Ensuring initial and ongoing support for school reform efforts (see page 14)

Ongoing Implementation

- Developing benchmarks for measuring progress (see page 15)
- Helping principals cultivate the unique leadership skills necessary (see page 15)
- Meaningful involvement of parents in school reform (see page 16)
- Developing networks of schools (see page 17)
- Collecting and analyzing data and adjusting reform efforts (see page 17)
- Incorporating teachers new to the school into the reform effort (see page 18)

Overall Impression

Overall, the “CSRD in the Field” visits revealed great enthusiasm and hope for the CSRD program. The districts and schools recognized the need for, and were committed to, change and improvement. Visitors observed a great variety in the models selected by schools, the process schools used to research and develop staff support for reform models, and how models are being integrated into a vision of entire-school change. There is also significant variety in the role

districts are playing in helping schools choose models and supporting comprehensive reform in CSRD schools. The visits also revealed some of the common challenges districts and schools are facing as they implement comprehensive reform strategies.

Considerations for States, Districts, Schools and Technical Assistance Providers

In light of the early stage of implementation, and the number of sites visited, this report will not attempt to draw broad conclusions about the course of the CSRD program. However, it highlights examples and shares some helpful observations across sites visited, noting some issues that other states, districts, and schools should consider as they proceed with the implementation of the CSRD program and with comprehensive reform efforts in general.

Developing School Reform Programs

- *States, districts, and technical assistance providers should consider providing ***focused assistance to schools on how to use data*** to develop and continuously improve their school reform programs.*

The effective use of data is key to making good decisions about matching reform models with schools and developing programs to meet the needs of students. Data on student achievement, attendance, and other important indicators, and the relationship of those data to school curriculum, school climate, and teacher capacity plays an essential role in continuous school improvement efforts. “CSRD in the Field” visits suggest that some schools need assistance to move beyond the level of identifying broad problem areas, such as the need to improve achievement in reading or math, to a finer grained, more detailed analysis of these issues.

While some of the schools we visited made connections between the general academic needs of students, the needs of the school community, and the models they chose, others did not seem to be making extensive use of detailed school and student level data to make decisions and guide the change process. We did find examples of schools that are effectively using data to guide practice. In one school we visited, teachers are administering weekly assessments designed for each grade level to monitor student mastery of state and local standards and identify what is working and how daily instruction can be improved. Tests are graded quickly to give teachers immediate feedback. Teachers and the principal at the school use the information to discuss progress and plan future lessons.

Another school is using data to analyze whether the model chosen is adequately meeting the needs of all students. Early data on the model is showing improvements for the school as a whole, but closer analysis of the data reveals that the progress of the lower performing students in the school is lagging. The principal and teachers concluded that the lower achieving students needed more attention in basic skills than the model provides. As a result, the school will continue implementing the current model, but is incorporating instructional features at the early grades that are more specifically focused on the needs of low performing students.

The data schools need to analyze to improve teaching and learning are not limited to student assessment information. In one school we visited, a “school implementation group” has developed a self-assessment for teachers. The results of the assessment are used to help teachers learn what about their instruction is going well, what needs work, and how to develop professional development activities to better meet their classroom needs.

Our visits suggest that districts can play an important role in helping schools understand and use data effectively. In one district, the superintendent implemented a district-wide policy that every employee takes a seminar on data quality management. This policy does not include just administrative staff, but faculty, bus drivers and janitors as well. The length of the class varies by position within the district. The superintendent is using the class as a tool to ensure that data drive the decision making process.

In another district we visited, the district is supporting schools by providing professional development in the use of assessments. The district works with schools to disaggregate data for various groups of students and use this information to determine needs and develop improvement strategies.

Resources on Effective Use of Data

North Central Regional Education Laboratory
Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices: A Guide for Schools and Districts
<http://www.ncrel.org/csri/tools/makegood.pdf>

Northwest Regional Educational Lab Comprehensive Center
Evaluating Whole-School Reform Efforts: A Guide for District and School Staff
<http://www.nwrac.org/pub/whole-school.html>

Mid-Continent Regional Educational Lab
Evaluating for Success: An Evaluation Guide for Schools and Districts
<http://www.mcrel.org/products/csrd-eval.asp>

Maryland Department of Education
School Improvement in Maryland
<http://www.mdk12.org/index.html>

Lab for Student Success
Achieving Student Success: An Interactive Online Tool Based on a Handbook of Widely Implemented Research-Based Education Reform Models
<http://www.reformhandbook-LSS.org/>

Ohio Department of Education
Reference Guide to Continuous Improvement Planning for Ohio School Districts
<http://schoolimprovement.ode.state.oh.us>

MPR Associates
At Your Fingertips: Using Everyday Data to Improve Schools
http://www.mprinc.com/html/resources/ayf_brochure_main.htm

- *States should try to ensure that they provide **adequate time for districts and schools to assess their needs and investigate programs** (including locally developed approaches) that are effective, address identified needs, and are part of a coherent overall reform effort.*

Our early visits to CSRD schools and districts revealed some concerns about how the short time frames on CSRD competitions may hinder the process of matching schools and reform models. Some of the CSRD sites we visited indicated that the short application period made it difficult to conduct a full needs assessment and effectively research, match, and build support for reform models. Some described only having a matter of weeks to pull together their CSRD applications.

The schools we visited that were most prepared for implementation were ready because they had done research and worked on building support for school change both among the school faculty and at the central district office before the CSRD program was introduced.

One district we visited dealt with this challenge by offering planning grants to schools, encouraging them to take time to adequately prepare for a comprehensive reform effort prior to beginning the CSRD application and grant process.

Resources on Planning for Comprehensive School Reform	
<p>WestEd Regional Education Laboratory <i>Comprehensive School Reform: Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards</i> (guidebook and videos) http://www.wested.org/csrd/guidebook</p>	<p>Lab for Student Success <i>State Applications for Comprehensive School Reform Funds</i> http://www.temple.edu/LSS/csr_rfp.htm</p>
<p>U.S. Department of Education <i>Implementing Schoolwide Programs: An Idea Book on Planning</i> http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/</p>	<p>American Federation of Teachers <i>Seeing Progress: A Guide to Visiting Schools Using Promising Programs</i> http://www.aft.org/edissues/ras/guide/change/seeing.htm</p>
<p><i>Selected Profiles of Early State Implementation Efforts</i> http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/profiles.html</p>	

- *States, technical assistance providers, and others should be clear with districts and schools about the **appropriate use of the list of programs in the CSRD legislation**, as well as the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) catalog and other resources in choosing models and implementing a comprehensive school reform program.*

A number of the schools we visited this past year had obtained copies of the Northwest Lab's compendium of reform models and reported that it was a helpful way to focus their search for models that might be appropriate for their school. However, while a valuable resource, the guide is neither a set of recommended models nor a selection of models approved for CSRD funding.

Therefore, states and districts should not automatically assume that by choosing a model included in the NWREL catalog, schools have sufficiently demonstrated that their proposed reform effort fully addresses the CSRD framework.

States and districts should encourage schools to use multiple sources of information on models and designs, particularly for examining actual data supporting the effectiveness of various models. The NWREL catalog and other resources on models and designs are simply tools for examining the elements and effectiveness of various models. Schools must also think about how the models described link with their own student and school needs. In preparing and reviewing applications, states and districts should pay careful attention to whether schools demonstrate that the needs of the school are reflected in the design of the comprehensive reform program, including the models chosen.

Resources for Choosing Reform Models	
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory <i>Catalog of School Reform Models</i> http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog	American Federation of Teachers <i>Improving Low-Performing High Schools: Ideas and Promising Programs for Low-Performing High Schools</i> http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/lphs.pdf
American Institutes for Research <i>An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform</i> http://www.aasa.org/Reform	U.S. Department of Education <i>CSRD Continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness</i> http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/csrdgui.html#AB
Kentucky Department of Education <i>Results-Based Practices Showcase (1997-98)</i> To order call (502) 564-3421	<i>Tools for Schools</i> http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ToolsforSchools/
The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation <i>Better by Design? A Consumer's Guide to Schoolwide Reform</i> (by Jim Traub) http://www.edexcellence.net/library/bbd/better_by_design.html	

- *States, districts and schools should ensure that reform efforts **meet the needs of all students, including special education and English language learners.***

Comprehensive reform efforts should not just focus on a single grade, subject area or a particular group of students. The concept behind comprehensive school reform is that improvements should benefit every student in the school. It is critical that the needs of special populations, such as special education students and English language learners are addressed by the school's reform program. Many schools struggle with integrating special populations into their reform efforts. Others, however, are taking significant steps in this area.

At one rural school visited by the In the Field team, special education students are full participants in the school's reform program. This school, which has a high percentage of students with individualized education plans, operates an inclusion program. Because all special education students spend at least part of their day in general education classrooms, they are involved in all aspects of the school's comprehensive reform program, including the model that guides the school's work overall. The school has one set of challenging expectations for all students, and includes special education students in standardized assessments whenever appropriate.

Elsewhere, an urban school with a high percentage of limited English proficient students selected a reform model that included a Spanish-language component. The model has a curriculum and materials specifically designed for Spanish speakers, and features literature originally written in Spanish rather than simply translated into Spanish. In this dual language program, English language learners receive their

primary literacy instruction in Spanish followed by an English as Second Language block. Once students achieve English proficiency, their primary literacy instruction is in English, supplemented by a literature block in Spanish later in the day.

Resources on Comprehensive School Reform and Special Populations

Region IX Southwest Comprehensive Center
Comprehensive School Reform Models
Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners
<http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/CSRD-Guide/csrd-title.htm>

Other schools visited are using variations of this dual language approach. One school uses a two-way program in which an equal number of Spanish speakers and English speakers learn both languages together, while another school gradually increases the amount of time students are taught in each language. At this school, kindergarten and first grade are taught 90% of the time in Spanish and receive 10% of instruction in English. In second grade the ratio changes to 80:20. This pattern continues until fifth grade, when instructional time is equally divided between English and Spanish.

Implementing School Reform Programs

- *States, districts, and technical assistance providers should consider whether they need to provide further assistance in **assessing the alignment between school reform models/ programs and state and district school improvement plans, standards, and assessments.***

Resources on the State and District Role in Reform

Consortium for Policy Research on Education (CPRE)

States and Districts and Comprehensive School Reform
<http://www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre/docs/pubs/rb24.pdf>

North Central Regional Education Laboratory

Making Good Choices: Focus on the District
 (forthcoming)
<http://www.ncrel.org/csri/>

New American Schools

Allan Odden *How to Create and Manage a Decentralized Education System*
<http://www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddec.pdf>

The issue of “matching” in CSRD is not only about the relationship between schools and their chosen reform models; as important is the fit between the school’s plan for reform and district and state priorities. Some models come with their own “standards” and attention may need to be given to how those standards fit with state content and student performance standards, particularly as schools are likely to be held accountable for performance based on state assessments. Other models have curriculum components that ought to be considered in the context of district or state expectations for student learning.

The alignment between a reform model and state standards should be considered as early as possible in order to avoid confusion and frustration later. One school visited discovered after implementation had begun that the instructional materials provided by the model were not aligned with state standards. The school, with assistance from the model, is taking steps to resolve this discrepancy. While this school is taking positive steps to correct this issue, it is preferable for issues of alignment to be examined and considered *prior to* model adoption and implementation.

Two of the districts we visited as part of “CSRD in the Field” provide school reform facilitators for CSRD schools who help address such issues. These educators act as liaisons between the school and the district and are seen as a valuable resource in making sure that school and district efforts are aligned.

In one school, the external partner -- a local university -- assists all teachers in developing weekly instructional plans that address state and local standards. A portion of the professional development for implementing their chosen model includes expert staff from the university working with teachers in the classroom on successful teaching strategies designed to teach according to standards.

- *States, districts, and technical assistance providers should support schools in **integrating models more fully into comprehensive school reform plans** that address all the key aspects of how schools function.*

The CSRD legislation sets out nine components of comprehensive reform. But few models, if any, fully address all nine of these aspects of school operations. In some of the schools we visited, it was clear that staff see their selected model as part of an overall effort – a piece of a larger reform vision. Some of the schools we visited are using CSRD as an opportunity to organize their reform efforts into a comprehensive, coherent effort.

An elementary school visited has worked with its facilitator, a local university, to specifically ensure that all nine components of the CSRD legislation are addressed in the school’s reform effort. The university assisted with some of the more difficult elements by training new teachers, providing professional development and other technical assistance, and assisting with data collection and analysis. Additionally, the university draws upon its ties with business and state institutions to enhance the service provided to the school.

Resources on the Components of a Comprehensive Reform Effort

U.S. Department of Education

CSRD program legislation and guidance

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/csrdgui.html>

Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/urbanhope/>

National Clearinghouse on Comprehensive School Reform <http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Comprehensive School Reform Self-Assessment Tool for Schools

<http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/tool2.pdf>

Changes in some other schools, however, are primarily confined to implementing the models rather than addressing the entire operation of the schools. While this may be due, in part, to the early timing of our site visits, it is important for schools to understand the implementation of models as just a part of a coherent and broader reform plan.

Part of the issue requires schools to be attentive to including all students as part of reform efforts. In one high school implementing career academies, only about a quarter of students participate in the academies. For others, the curriculum and instruction remain very much the same as before the reform effort. Although the school plans to expand the career academies, it does not seem likely that the effort will expand to include all students and teachers.

- *Although it may be necessary and desirable to combine two or more models in a school to achieve comprehensive reform, extra care must be taken to **ensure that multiple models are really part of a coherent whole.***

Some schools are implementing more than one model as part of their comprehensive reform efforts. As part of CSRD, some schools are implementing more than one new model from the start of their comprehensive reform efforts; in other cases schools are significantly expanding their reform efforts by implementing a new model in addition to existing models or programs in use. For example, one school we visited is using a process-oriented model in conjunction with a literacy program. While implementing multiple models may be an acceptable approach for some schools, a great deal of attention must be paid to the coherence and coordination among the models within the schools. Schools must be certain that the models complement their overall vision for reform. The point of CSRD is to help schools move away from piecemeal approaches to school reform that mix and match different programs and models together without an overarching vision and purpose.

One school we visited, just beginning to implement a model with its CSRD grant, is also implementing a reform model sponsored by a local university. While the two models do not necessarily conflict with one another, the model developers seem to know little of each other and there seem to be few efforts to coordinate implementation across the models.

Another school we visited is implementing a new reading program and a new computer-based program designed to improve literacy. Unfortunately, prior to adopting the computer-based program, neither the alignment between the computer program and state standards nor coordination between the two literacy programs was considered. The facilitator of the reading program has only a basic awareness of the computer-based program and has not worked with teachers on the complementary nature of the two programs. Better communication between the parties responsible for each program could have strengthened implementation of the school's literacy program as a whole.

During this past year we have found a number of schools struggling with the integration of multiple programs and initiatives within their schools. In one school that created teams to deal

with various aspects of reform, it is not clear if the faculty sees the teams as part of one larger effort or as separate efforts. However, we visited another school where faculty and administrators are highly attentive to the integration of multiple models. This school has two external assistance providers—one from a model developer and one from a local university. Both provide on-site facilitators to assist with professional development. In this case, the facilitators work together to further reform and their efforts are complementary.

A common thread among schools successfully integrating different models is the involvement of the school principal and awareness of program facilitator(s) of the strengths of each model component. Without this coordination, it is unlikely that the different models will form a coherent, comprehensive program. The team visited a school well into the implementation stage of reform that was integrating several parts of different reform models to create a unified reform effort. The facilitator was aware of each of the different improvements underway and was able to maintain a focus on the vision and mission of the school as developed by the faculty and staff. The facilitator encouraged collaboration as well as provided feedback based on observations. A coherent set of reforms appears to have been implemented; it is difficult to tell where one model starts and another leaves off.

- *States and districts should support schools in **planning the implementation of proposed reform efforts**, particularly in terms of staffing and in arranging time and other support for professional development.*

**Resources on Allocating
Time and Resources**

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education
(CPRE)**

Karen Hawley-Miles and Linda Darling-Hammond, *Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons from High-Performing Schools*

<http://www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre/docs/pubs/pb-03.pdf>

**North Central Regional Educational
Laboratory (NCREL)**

Professional Development: Staff Learning for Student Results

<http://www.ncrel.org/pd>

New American Schools

Allan Odden *How to Rethink School Budgets to Support School Transformation*

<http://www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddenbud.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education

Prisoners of Time

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/>

Time was a major challenge for virtually all the schools we visited and changes in uses of time are a major feature of reform in a number of CSRD schools. A key issue is how to find time for quality professional development without reducing instructional time or overly relying on substitute teachers.

The schools we visited this year are taking some unique approaches to making time for professional development. One district is using Empowerment Zone and school improvement partnership funds from the state to provide extended time – one hour each day – for teacher planning and professional development activities. Another school has redesigned its faculty meetings into professional development study groups. One school has regular professional development dinners so that teachers can get together on a regular basis outside their classrooms. In order to encourage staff participation in summer professional development, another school arranged the model

training with a local university so that participating teachers could get college credit for the activity.

In one school, grade clusters of children attend classes such as art, music, computer literacy, and library all on one day each week. This innovative scheduling allows grade level teams to spend a full day coordinating classroom instruction and sharing timely, practical information and teaching strategies. The full day is also used to observe teachers in other schools, attend district meetings, and participate in professional development sponsored by their external partner for CSRD. The effort to reorganize time in the school seems to be benefiting teachers, not only by creating time but also by fostering collaboration and a collegial atmosphere.

Many districts and schools use substitute teachers to make time for teachers to participate in professional development. The concern with this approach is that days with substitute teachers can be lost days for students – especially where the model being implemented requires specific skills and instructional techniques. One district we visited is addressing this concern by assigning three specific substitute teachers for a CSRD school. These substitute teachers are participating with regular staff in professional development activities on the reform model so that they are better able to step into classrooms at the school when they are needed without disrupting student learning.

States and districts may wish to consider helping schools sort through as many of these issues related to time and professional development as possible on the front end, before schools are in the middle of trying to implement reforms. States may also want to focus on these issues in the ongoing technical assistance they provide to districts and schools.

Support for Reform Efforts

- *Districts and schools should make sure they have **a clear mutual understanding about the role the district will play** in supporting the school's reform efforts, in conjunction with outside technical assistance providers such as model developers.*

Resources on District Support for Comprehensive Reform

RAND

Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase

<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR942/MR942.pdf>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Implementing School Reform Models: The Clover Park Experience

<http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/clover.html>

Many district offices are playing a large role in providing support for implementing comprehensive reform in the schools we visited. For example, two districts we visited provide facilitators to work in the schools implementing comprehensive reform. These facilitators act both as resources and leaders at the school level, as well as liaisons to the district.

One district has created an Area Superintendent position to support all the schools in the district (CSRD funded or not) implementing one particular reform model. The Area

Superintendent's role is to make sure that the schools have the resources and authority to improve, make necessary decisions, and have the time to show expected improvements. The Superintendent meets regularly with schools implementing the reform models as well as the city's larger central administration.

Another district provides a coordinator for each model being implemented in its schools. The coordinator assists schools in working with the model developers as well as ensuring frequent communication with district officials. Additionally, district personnel regularly visit the CSRD schools to maintain familiarity with the models and to see how implementation is progressing.

Because CSRD involves the participation of other, external technical assistance providers, it is important for roles to be clearly defined and efforts coordinated. In one example of this coordination, a community's mayor, city council, and chamber of commerce joined together with the traditional school support systems of the district, the model developer (a state university), and the school and held an education summit. The result of this meeting was an agreement among all parties on the goals that will shape the education policies in the district. This summit not only clarified how the district would support schools implementing this program, but also addressed support the district would receive for this initiative.

- *States, districts, and technical assistance providers should consider whether districts and schools need further assistance in reaching **shared understandings regarding the type and intensity of services to be provided by external partners or providers.***

The design of the CSRD program includes an expectation that model developers and external technical assistance providers will be key sources of support for CSRD schools. In general, the schools we visited in this "CSRD in the Field" initiative are feeling well supported by external model developers.

Yet some schools express concern that the agreed-upon level of support they are receiving from model developers will not be sufficient, either because not enough ongoing contact has been negotiated or because schools think they may need additional support beyond what the model developer provides.

A school developing its own model has had some difficulty in forming a strong partnership with its technical assistance provider, a local university. Many staff members expressed concerns that the university was focused on developing a generically applicable model instead of addressing the specific reform needs of the

Resources on Arrangements with Model Developers

Regional Education Laboratories

A Guide to Working with Model Providers

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/model.pdf>

Education Commission of the States

*Comprehensive School Reform: Criteria and Questions
Selecting School Reform Models*

<http://www.ecs.org/>

North Central Regional Education Laboratory

*Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices:
A Guide for Schools and Districts (Appendix H)*

<http://www.ncrel.org/csri/tools/makegood.pdf>

American Institutes for Research

An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform

<http://www.aasa.org/Reform>

school. This perception of differing priorities had contributed to a great deal of frustration and slow progress in implementing reforms.

In a few instances, schools we visited expressed difficulty contacting staff representing some models, and schools with upcoming staff development activities hosted by developers did not know what was to take place in these sessions. Thus, states and districts have a role to play in helping schools become good “consumers” of reform models’ services and can play an important role in helping schools and technical assistance providers learn to work together.

- *States and districts should consider the **additional needs of schools developing their own reform efforts, particularly in collaborating with external partners.***

Building partnerships with technical assistance providers presents special challenges for schools working with homegrown approaches. Because schools adopting locally developed models often encounter the development and implementation phases of the model simultaneously, it is especially important for mutual understandings to be reached. There should be clear agreement on the type and intensity of services that will be provided to the school. In many schools using locally developed reform models the vision is still developing, which may at first generate more confusion and anxiety than is usually associated with established models. Further, schools may not know what to expect in terms of an implementation timeline when the model is still being developed. This can create a ripple effect that extends to benchmarking and data collection. The external partner must recognize and be able to address the technical assistance needs of the school in both phases, and states and districts need to ensure that all of these needs are met.

- *States, districts, and schools should consider what approaches may be most successful in **ensuring initial and ongoing support for school reform efforts at the school level.***

Districts have an important role to play in helping build school support for change and helping teachers and staff “buy in” to reform efforts – both in selecting models and in sustaining reform. For example, in one site visited, the district and a local foundation partnered to help teachers, particularly those most skeptical that change could happen, visit other schools implementing a similar comprehensive reform effort. When these teachers came back enthusiastic about what they had seen, other teachers became more committed to change. Another district we visited provided funds for a week-long summer institute sponsored by a model developer in order to give school faculty an opportunity to understand and support the reform effort.

We found such efforts on the state level as well. One state provides technical assistance to schools and districts on the evaluation, selection, and development of CSRD programs. A liaison from the state department of education is assigned to each school implementing CSRD and is specifically trained in the different models used by those schools. The liaisons ensure communication with the state, broker resources, provide support, and help keep the reform process on track at the school level.

In our visits we also observed promising school-level efforts to build ongoing support for reform. One school is making funds available so that all teachers in the school can visit another school implementing the same model. This has been a major investment. In addition, the CSRD school has arranged for teachers from its partner school to visit and provide professional development, including modeling lessons to demonstrate effective instructional strategies.

**Resources on Building and Sustaining
School-Level Support for Reform**

RAND

*Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up
Phase*

[http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR942/MR942.pdf/](http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR942/MR942.pdf)

In another school, a veteran teacher is being trained as the model facilitator. The teacher has leadership skills, is respected by the other teachers, and has an interest in the reform effort. His job is to help teachers stay on task, provide professional development, meet with and develop leadership teams, and make certain that plans are implemented. The facilitator also helps teachers with instruction and scheduling problems.

Ongoing Implementation

- *States, districts, and technical assistance providers should consider whether schools need **further assistance in developing benchmarks** for measuring progress in implementing reform efforts and improving student achievement.*

The CSRD program requires schools to develop benchmarks related to the implementation of their comprehensive reform programs. These benchmarks can help guide a school through the change process and are useful tools for states, districts, and technical assistance providers to understand a school's expectations and measure progress.

One school we visited has developed a regular progress plan which helps staff stay on track, and shows faculty how things are going. This regular return to the school's goals, expectations, and progress is helping to build and reinforce commitment to the reform effort. Another site has developed an observation tool for principals and teachers to use to see if real change is taking place in classroom practice in order to ensure that reform is not just an add-on but a replacement of old practices. The tool includes teacher questionnaires regarding the degree of implementation and classroom observation of changes in instructional approaches.

- *States and districts should consider whether further assistance is needed in **helping principals cultivate the unique leadership skills** necessary to support a comprehensive reform effort.*

Leadership is an essential ingredient to school reform. In CSRD schools, the principal's understanding of the model and how it fits in with a broader vision for school change is crucial. Sustaining that vision and helping implement the necessary changes takes skill. Principals in the

“CSRD in the Field” schools we visited this year are actively negotiating with external model developers and technical assistance providers, and are engaged in professional development, retreats, and other activities to build commitment to comprehensive change. These activities require a strong emphasis on the role of the principal as not only an administrator but as an instructional leader.

States and districts can support the cultivation of good leaders. For example, in one district, where CSRD has been integrated into a broader effort to turn around low-performing schools, the district provides schools with a business manager to help allocate and monitor funds and generally oversee the administrative issues in the schools. This resource is available primarily to low-performing schools and is intended to free school principals’ time and provide them with support so they can focus on being instructional leaders in their schools.

Stability of leadership is an ongoing challenge, both at the school and district level. One district we visited has had nine superintendents in the past eight years. This makes maintaining any reform efforts extraordinarily difficult. Yet, in another district, the school board and the principal agreed to a five year contract, assuring that the school’s leadership will have the time necessary to fully implement and evaluate the comprehensive reform model.

- *Districts and schools should consider **how to meaningfully involve parents** in the development and implementation of school reform plans.*

Parent involvement in the education of children has long been understood to be an important predictor of academic success. Districts and schools play a key role in cultivating this involvement by reaching out to parents and other community partners, involving them in decision making about school reform, and inviting their active participation in their children’s learning at school and in the home.

This is especially important when reform models require a new role for parents. For example, in one of the schools we visited, the reform model requires significant changes in the kind and amount of homework students are assigned. It became clear that parents would need more information about the purpose of the new work and how they could help their children. In response, the CSRD school invited parents to a detailed orientation where they could ask questions and learn about the model.

One school is implementing a model that requires parents to read to their child every night. The school reached out to parents through special programs to explain the model and the time commitment, as well as to provide suggestions on reading with children each night. Additionally, the school is attempting to make parents feel welcome at the school through

Resources on Family Involvement

U.S. Department of Education

Compact for Learning

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Compact/>

Strong Families, Strong Schools

<http://eric->

[web.tc.columbia.edu/families/strong](http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/strong)

Partnership for Family Involvement

<http://pfie.ed.gov>

National Network of Partnership Schools

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000>

another involvement program. This program encourages parents to walk students to class, get a cup of coffee, and talk with the faculty.

At another site, parents were closely involved in the year-long model selection process for the school. Parents studied various models during the school year and one parent was able to attend a national conference related to school reform. Parents were invited to view videotapes on the models they found most appealing. The tapes helped illustrate the roles parents could play in supporting implementation of the reform model.

- *States, districts, and technical assistance providers may wish to consider how they can **develop networks of schools** implementing or interested in implementing the same or similar models.*

Resources on Schools Implementing CSRD

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Database of Schools Awarded CSRD Funds
<http://www.sedl.org/csrd/awards.html>

Regional Education Laboratories (sponsored by WestEd Regional Education Laboratory)

CSRD Interactive Community
<http://www.csrdweb.net>

The schools we visited as part of this initiative expressed interest in networking with other schools involved with the same models and in the same process of implementing and sustaining whole school changes. Two of the model developers working with schools we visited have established networks of schools that teachers and school and district staff may tap into. The network includes research, instructional information, professional development material, and other information related to the models. One model developer regularly brings together teachers from participating schools in the region not

only for professional development but also to facilitate information exchange and create peer networks among the teachers.

States and districts also can be instrumental in making connections between schools. In one site, the district office is taking an active role in linking schools using the same model, including both schools that receive and do not receive CSRD funding.

One rural school coordinates the dates of visits from their model facilitator with two other schools in the region implementing the same model in order to minimize travel expenses. The model provider has been very understanding of the schools' funding constraints, and has made every effort to make this arrangement work. In addition to the financial benefits, the schools have profited from the sharing of experiences and ideas fostered by this arrangement.

- *As programs are implemented, states, districts and technical assistance providers should consider how to assist schools in **determining what data to collect, how to analyze data and how to adjust reform efforts accordingly.***

Several schools visited were actively collecting and using data. After analyzing the data, schools were attempting to adjust teaching priorities and resources. One school, for example, collects

data on student achievement, discipline, attendance, and teaching experience. These data are disaggregated by gender, free and reduced lunch, and race. Teachers have written narratives in order to ‘connect’ with the data. By interpreting the data, teachers are able to prioritize issues and reach consensus about their improvement goals.

Another school maintains a portfolio of students’ work from prekindergarten through fifth grade. Teachers assess a student’s progress by reviewing the work maintained in the file, with a particular eye towards the level of risk-taking in the work. This school also asks for direct feedback from students. All third, fourth, and fifth graders are surveyed on their feelings about their progress in reading and math. The survey focuses on student concerns and teacher expectations. The data is then analyzed and the faculty develops strategies to strengthen weak areas.

- *Districts, schools and technical assistance providers should consider **how to familiarize new staff members with ongoing reform efforts.***

One of the biggest challenges to sustaining a reform effort is incorporating and familiarizing faculty new to the school who are not well-versed in the efforts. One site visited is overcoming this obstacle by assigning a mentor to teachers new to the school. Arrangements have been made for these new teachers to visit a school further along in the implementation process of the same model so that they can gain a better understanding of what is envisioned at their school.

Another school schedules a forty-minute planning block each day for teachers new to the school. Each week new teachers spend one of these blocks with administrators and one with the school team. It is critical that new faculty, whether first-year teachers or experienced teachers, receive assistance and professional development so that they are comfortable with and supportive of the school’s reform program.

Conclusion

The Department’s visits to schools in the early stages of implementing entire school reform strategies reveal great enthusiasm and energy surrounding the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program -- a promising sign and testament to the commitment of educators across the country to helping all students meet high standards for learning. The “CSRD in the Field” initiative is one way in which the U.S. Department of Education is working to support effective comprehensive school reform efforts by developing supportive relationships with states, districts, and schools, and by helping to collect and disseminate useful information on the program. We hope that these early observations can assist states, districts, and schools to foresee the opportunities and challenges inherent in undertaking research-based, schoolwide improvements.

Resources

The resources listed below are included in the text boxes throughout the report.

Resources on Effective Use of Data

North Central Regional Education Laboratory

Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices: A Guide for Schools and Districts
<http://www.ncrel.org/csri/tools/makegood.pdf>

Northwest Regional Education Lab Comprehensive Center

Evaluating Whole-School Reform Efforts: A Guide for District and School Staff
<http://www.nwrac.org/pub/whole-school.html>

Mid-Continent Regional Educational Lab

Evaluating for Success: An Evaluation Guide for Schools and Districts
<http://www.mcrel.org/products/csrd-eval.asp>

Maryland Department of Education

School Improvement in Maryland
<http://www.mdk12.org/index.html>

Lab for Student Success

*Achieving Student Success:
An Interactive Online Tool Based on a Handbook of
Widely Implemented Research-Based Education
Reform Models*
<http://www.reformhandbook-LSS.org/>

Ohio Department of Education

*Reference Guide to Continuous Improvement
Planning for Ohio School Districts*
<http://schoolimprovement.ode.ohio.gov>

MPR Associates

*At Your Fingertips: Using Everyday Data to Improve
Schools*
[http://www.mprinc.com/html/resources/
ayf_brochure_main.htm](http://www.mprinc.com/html/resources/ayf_brochure_main.htm)

Resources on Planning for Comprehensive School Reform

WestEd Regional Education Laboratory

*Comprehensive School Reform: Research-Based
Strategies to Achieve High Standards*
<http://www.wested.org/csrd/resources.html>

U.S. Department of Education

*Implementing Schoolwide Programs: An Idea Book
on Planning*
http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/

American Federation of Teachers

*Seeing Progress: A Guide to Visiting Schools Using
Promising Programs*
[http://www.aft.org/edissues/rsguide/change/
seeing.htm](http://www.aft.org/edissues/rsguide/change/seeing.htm)

Lab for Student Success

*State Applications for Comprehensive School Reform
Funds*
http://www.temple.edu/LSS/csrd_rfp.htm

U.S. Department of Education

*Selected Profiles of Early State Implementation
Efforts*
[http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/
profiles.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/profiles.html)

Resources for Choosing Reform Models

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Catalog of School Reform Models
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog>

American Institutes for Research

An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform
<http://www.aasa.org/Reform>

Kentucky Department of Education

Results-Based Practices Showcase (1997-98)
To order call (502) 564-3421

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

*Better by Design? A Consumer's Guide
to Schoolwide Reform* (by Jim Traub)
[http://www.edexcellence.net/library/bbd/
better_by_design.html#intro](http://www.edexcellence.net/library/bbd/better_by_design.html#intro)

American Federation of Teachers

Improving Low-Performing High Schools: Ideas and Promising Programs for Low-Performing High Schools

<http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/lphs.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education

CSRD Continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/csrddgui.html#AB>

Tools for Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ToolsforSchools/>

Resources on Comprehensive School Reform and Special Populations

Region IX Southwest Comprehensive Center

Comprehensive School Reform Models Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners

<http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/CSRD-Guide/csrddtitle.htm>

Resources on the State and District Role in Reform

Consortium for Policy Research on Education (CPRE)

States and Districts and Comprehensive School Reform

<http://www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre/docs/pubs/rb24.pdf>

New American Schools

Allan Odden *How to Create and Manage a Decentralized Education System*

<http://www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddec.pdf>

Resources on the Components of a Comprehensive Reform Effort

U.S. Department of Education

CSRD program legislation and guidance

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/csrddgui.html>

Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/urbanhope/>

National Clearinghouse on Comprehensive School Reform

<http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Comprehensive School Reform Self-Assessment Tool for Schools

<http://www.nwrel.org/csrddp/tool2.pdf>

Resources on Allocating Time and Resources

Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)

Karen Hawley-Miles and Linda Darling-Hammond, *Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons from High-Performing Schools*

<http://www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre/docs/pubs/pb-03.pdf>

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

Professional Development: Staff Learning for Student Results

<http://www.ncrel.org/pd>

New American Schools

Allan Odden *How to Rethink School Budgets to Support School Transformation*

<http://www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddenbud.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education

Prisoners of Time

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/>

Resources on District Support for Comprehensive Reform

RAND

Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase

<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR942/MR942.pdf>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Implementing School Reform Models: The Clover Park Experience

<http://www.nwrel.org/csrddp/clover.html>

Resources on Arrangements with Model Developers

Regional Education Laboratories

Guide to Working with Model Providers

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/compreform/model.pdf>

Education Commission of the States
Comprehensive School Reform: Criteria and Questions Selecting School Reform Models
<http://www.ecs.org/>

North Central Regional Education Laboratory
Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices: A Guide for Schools and Districts (Appendix H)
<http://www.ncrel.org/csri/tools/makegood.pdf>

American Institutes for Research
An Educators Guide to Schoolwide Reform
<http://www.aasa.org/Reform>

Resources on Building and Sustaining School-Level Support for Reform

RAND
Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase
<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR942/MR942.pdf/>

Resources on Family Involvement

U.S. Department of Education
Compact for Learning
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Compact/>

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<http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/strong>

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